

Keep in Touch

These activities have been adapted from *Walk This Way! Classroom Hikes to Learning* by Rebecca Olien. 1998. Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann

Topic: Eco Kids

Objectives: Explore textures in nature

Grade Level: pre-k – 3

Time: 25 – 30 minutes

Vocabulary:

texture
rough
soft
scratchy
smooth
fuzzy
stiff

Materials: a collection of objects with different textures, small paper bags or socks, bottle of bright nail polish, newsprint paper, crayons, index cards

Location: Noguchi Playscape, Front Lawn Grove, Piedmont Plateau

Background: The natural world is full of wonderful textures. Smooth things, rough things, soft and hard things, fuzzy and scratchy things are all around you. In these activities you will use your sense of touch to describe things in nature.

Advance Preparation: Collect an assortment of natural objects with different textures. Some possible items are tree bark, pebbles, dry leaves, flower petals, dirt, seedpods, sand, and feathers. Place each item in a small paper bag or inside a sock. For children old enough to read, prepare index cards with a list of eight to ten textures for the scavenger hunt.

Procedure:

1. Before you begin, ask the children if they have ever been told “Do not touch.” Ask them why they think it is not a good idea to touch some things. Discuss some things that it is not safe to touch. Explain that today they will be touching safe things in nature to discover how these things feel. Ask them to name things they can think of that feel soft or hard, cold or hot, fuzzy or rough, scratchy or smooth. Let them think of other words that describe how things feel. Since most animals have no fingers, ask the children how animals feel things.
2. Ask each child to search for a small stone or pebble. Use the nail polish to mark each child’s rock with his or her initial. Set these aside to dry while the children do the next activity.

3. Have the children sit in small groups of three or four. Give each group a bag with one of the textured items inside. Let the children pass the bag around in their group and, without looking inside, describe how the object inside feels. Remind them of the words they thought of in the first activity. After each member of the group has had a chance to feel and describe the object, the children can try to guess what is in their group's bag. After they have guessed, let them peek to see what is inside. Then switch bags between groups and repeat the activity with a new textured object.
4. Divide the children into groups of six to eight and have the groups sit in small circles. Give each child the pebble that you have marked with the child's initials. Tell the children to close their eyes and feel their pebbles silently. After a few moments, ask them softly if the pebble is smooth or rough? Heavy or light? Does it have jagged edges or a crack or a hole or a dent in it? Then tell the children to place all the pebbles from their group in a pile in the center of their small circle. One at a time, let the children in each group close their eyes and feel among the pebbles to try to find their own pebble.
5. Give each child a piece of newsprint paper and a crayon with the paper wrap removed. Show them how to make a rubbing of the texture of a natural object such as a leaf or tree bark. Have the students make rubbings of several different natural objects on their sheet of newsprint. Display the rubbings and discuss with the children the different textures captured in their rubbings.
6. If the children are old enough to read, let them choose partners and give each pair a scavenger hunt card and a paper bag. On the card list textures such as smooth or fuzzy or bumpy. Suggest a few examples of the things they might collect that have these textures. Remind them of things they should not pick up or touch. Allow them five minutes to collect something for each texture on their card. Recognize the groups that successfully find all or most the items.
7. For younger children who cannot yet read, divide them into teams of four. In each group number the children one to four. Give each number a specific texture to find. For example all the children who are numbered "one" must find something rough. All number two's must find something hard, and so on. Again, remind the children of the things they should not pick up. Allow three to five minutes for the teams to find all four of their textures. Let them show the other teams what they found.